

Congressman Jesse Jackson, Jr., today introduced H.R. 5293, the Majority Vote Act of 2004 that would require States by 2008 to conduct general elections for Federal office using an instant runoff voting system. It also directs the Election Assistance Commission to make grants to States to defray the costs of administering such systems. The law would be applied to all federal elections in the States and include the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, American Samoa, Guam, and the United States Virgin Islands.

Jackson said, "The term 'instant runoff voting system' means a system for the election of candidates under which 'runoff counts' of candidates are conducted in rounds. Voters vote by ranking candidates on the ballot according to the order of their preference. If in any round no candidate receives a majority of the votes cast, the candidate with the fewest number of votes is eliminated and the remaining candidates advance to the next round. In each round a voter shall be considered to have cast one vote for the candidate the voter ranked highest on the ballot that has not been eliminated. The runoff counts are carried out automatically at the time the votes are cast and tabulated so there is no actual second election. A candidate is elected only when they reach 50 percent plus one.

"For example in Florida in 2000 under the instant runoff system voters would have cast their vote by ranking the candidates in the order of their choice from among Al Gore, George Bush, Ralph Nader and Pat Buchanan. In this instance Pat Buchanan finished last so he would be eliminated but his voters' second choice would be added to the totals of the other candidates. The same procedure would have been applied to the candidates with the next fewest votes, in this instance Ralph Nader. This process would continue until one of the candidates received 50 percent plus one of the votes.

"Instant runoff voting insures that a candidate is elected by a majority of voters and provides the winner with a mandate to govern. Instant runoff voting prohibits voting for a candidate who has policies and programs with which you agree resulting in the election of a candidate who has policies and programs with which you disagree. The simple plurality winner system used in most general elections today creates an incentive for candidates to engage in negative campaigning. Instant runoff voting encourages candidates to engage in positive campaigning in order to receive a higher ranking from their opponents' supporters. Instant runoff voting is used in Utah Republican Party primaries, Ireland, Australia and London," Jackson concluded.